TASTY HOME-COOKED SWEET SPREADS

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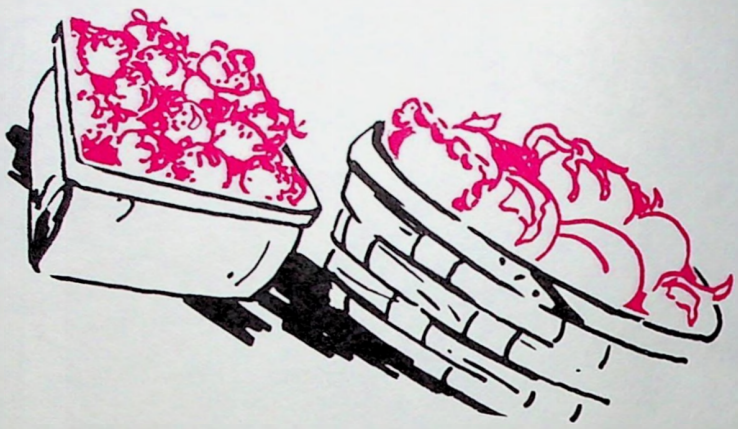
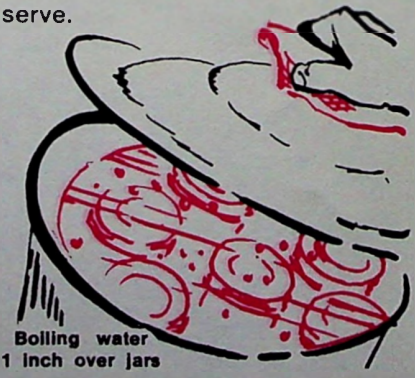


Sweet spreads add that special touch to any meal. They are enjoyed with hot breads and maybe even more so when piled on a slice of buttered bread. The clear colors and enticing aromas of these products add much toward satisfying eye appeal as well as taste.

There are many recipes of tasty products that may be prepared by cooking fruit juice and sugar, a fruit and sugar, a combination of fruits and sugar, or a combination of fruit, sugar, and nuts. Each product varies, depending on what ingredients are used and the method of preparation followed. Certain principles, however, apply to all sweet spreads prepared in home kitchens.

The final step in preparation—heat treatment—is the newest principle recommended by food scientists today for all sweet spreads. To prevent molding, the jars of spread are processed in a hot water bath after packing in the container. A simmering temperature of 180° F. is best for delicate products. This temperature is sufficient to destroy molds and expel air from jar, and it does not affect the quality of the preserved product. Twenty minutes for pint jars is sufficient. Ten minutes at boiling temperature (212° F.) is an acceptable alternative, if preferred.

Mold may occur on sweet spreads that contain a small proportion of sugar if they are not sealed immediately after being cooked. However, mold may grow on mixtures when sugar concentration is as high as 70 percent. Conserves frequently mold when the nuts have not been sterilized before being added to the thickened conserve.



Sweet Spreads

The difference between sweet spreads —butters, conserves, jams, jelly, marmalade, and preserves—is often confusing. A simple classification is this: if smooth, it's butter. If it's citrus fruit we call it marmalade. If crushed fruit, it's jam. If whole fruit, it's preserves. If mixed fruit, it's conserves. If it is clear, it's jelly.

To really distinguish one sweet spread from another, these descriptions may help.

Butters

Butters tend to be less sweet than other fruit spreads. They are usually made from larger fruits cooked until soft, and then the pulp is run through a sieve. Water is evaporated by slow cooking. Sugar and spices may be added if desired, but usually only in small amounts. Butters are smooth in texture and tend to mold early because of low sugar content.

Conserves

Conserves usually are a combination of several fruits to which raisins and nuts are added. The pieces of fruit are suspended in a thick sirup or in a jelly. Conserves are soft and easily spread.

Jams

Jams are often made from small fruits, such as berries, although larger fruits, either crushed or chopped, may be used. The fruit is cooked with sugar until soft and jelly-like. No attempt is made to retain the shape of the fruits, and the cooked jam may be quite smooth or contain small pieces of fruit. Jams vary in consistency but should spread easily.

Fruit Jelly

Fruit jelly is a beautifully colored transparent obtained by boiling fruit juice and sugar to form a mass that will quiver, yet be so tender it may be cut with a spoon and hold interesting shapes and angles. Flavor is the characteristic fruit flavor.

Marmalades

Marmalades have small pieces or thin slices of fruit suspended throughout a smooth, clear, jelly-like mixture. They are made of pulpy fruits, with citrus fruits being the favorites.

Preserves

Preserves contain small whole fruits or larger fruits cut into uniform pieces and held in a sirup varying from the thickness of honey to a soft jelly. The fruit is preserved by sugar. The preserves should be plump, glistening, mellow, and clear. Care is given to retain the original shape of the fruit.

Quality of Sweet Spreads

Four ingredients in the proper amounts are needed to make sweet spreads. They are fruit, pectin, acid, and sugar.

Fruit

The quality of sweet spreads is greatly affected by the fruit used. The ripeness of the fruit determines flavor quality. Underripe fruits lack natural fruit flavor and aroma, and are usually high in acid and low in fruit sugar.

Firm fruits retain their shape best during cooking, but the soft or mellow-ripe fruits possess a richer flavor and may be used advantageously when retention of shape is not important.

Irregular and imperfect fruits may be used for many sweet spreads made from mashed or chopped pulp. Spoiled or stale fruit should not be used, because spoilage will result and products will have inferior flavor.

The predominating flavor of all sweet spreads is influenced by the fruit or the combination of fruits used, but it is also affected by the amount of sugar used. For example, if we want apple butter to be served as a sweet spread on bread, we will use more sugar than if we plan to serve the apple butter as an accompaniment to pork.

For each product prepared, the ratio of sugar to fruit varies with the type of fruit used, its acidity, and with individual taste.

Pectin

Fruits vary in the amount of pectin they contain, and they must be cooked in order to extract pectin. The following fruits contain enough pectin to make a gel if about one-fourth of the fruit is underripe: Tart apples, crabapples, grapes, gooseberries, blackberries, quince, plums, and currants.

As fruit ripens, the pectin changes to a form that does not have gel-forming qualities. If ripe fruit is used, it is necessary to use added pectin.

Commercial pectins made from apple or citrus fruit are used with fruits low in pectin. To extract the pectin, the fruit must be boiled until soft, but too long cooking destroys the pectin. Commercial pectin is available in either powdered or liquid form.

Acid

The amount of acid varies in different fruits. It is higher in underripe fruits. Acid is necessary for flavor and for gel formation. Tart fruits contain enough acid. Lemon juice is often added to mild fruits to supply acid.

Some fruits have enough natural acid and pectin to make high quality sweet spreads. Other fruits may lack either pectin or acid, or have too low amount to make good sweet spreads, so the missing ingredients will need to be added.

Equipment

Effect of Sugar

The proportion of sugar affects the quantity and consistency of the sweet spread. The texture of the fruit in the finished product is determined by when the sugar is added. Fruit cooked in a sirup, or that to which the sugar is added at the beginning of the cooking period, tends to retain its shape. Fruit cooked in water becomes mushy. The sugar sirup draws a portion of the water from the fruit, and the sirup replaces the water. Thus, it toughens the tissues of the fruit and it becomes plump.

Cane or beet sugar can be used equally well in all products. If brown sugar is used, color and flavor, as well as consistency, are affected because brown sugar contains molasses.

Sugar helps in gel formation, serves as a preserving agent, and improves the flavor of jelled products. Sugar also has a firming effect on fruit tissues.

Rate of Cooking

Sweet spreads should be cooked as rapidly as possible to retain the best flavor, color, and texture in the product. Small quantities should be cooked at a time to prevent scorching, especially for those spreads which contain pulp. Mixtures of this type must be stirred frequently to prevent scorching.

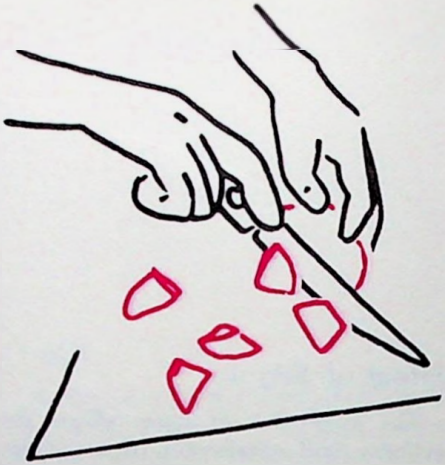
Sweet spreads are more easily prepared if equipment is planned carefully. A large flat-bottom kettle is desirable to allow a faster rate of concentration of the product. If rate is too slow, the sweet spread will become dark in color and strong in flavor. It is better to cook several small batches of sweet spreads than to cook one large recipe.

The material from which the equipment is made may also affect the quality of finished product. If metal kettles and spoons are used, the product tends to darken as stirring continues. It is wise to use a long-handled wooden spoon to stir the sweet spreads. Sometimes a metallic flavor is detected in the cooked product, also.

A thermometer is also a help to many inexperienced cooks. Most recipes give a temperature reading to which various products may be concentrated. A temperature of 9° F. above that of boiling water is suggested for marmalade, preserves, conserves, and jams. If these products are made with added pectin, the directions must be followed for each type of pectin used.

Sealing sweet spreads in airtight containers will insure better quality products, especially if the hot sealed jars are processed in a hot water bath for time indicated for each product.

Fruit Butters



Fruit butter may contain no added sugar or as much as one-half pound of sugar to one pound of fruit pulp. Apples, plums, peaches, and similar fruits are frequently used in making butterspreads.

Imperfect fruits are often made into butters. Spots and blemishes are removed, then fruit is cooked until tender and pressed through a sieve or food mill to remove cores, skins, etc.

The sieved pulp is cooked to evaporate moisture until it is thick enough to round up on a spoon before any sugar or spices are added.

Measure pulp and add sugar and spices at this stage of preparation. Boil butter rapidly, stirring constantly to prevent scorching and to retain as much as possible of the volatile oils and fragrance from spices.

Fruit butter is done when it is thick and clear. It will heap up on the spoon and drop off in sheets.

Fruit butter should be sealed in canning jars, then processed in hot water bath at simmering temperature (180° F.) 20 minutes.

APPLE-QUINCE BUTTER

1 quart quince pieces
2 quarts apple pieces
1 tablespoon grated lemon rind
Sugar

Peel quince and shred into fine pieces on vegetable shredder. Cook in a small amount of water until tender. Peel and shred apples. Combine apples with quince, and cook until soft. Press fruit through a sieve or food mill.

Measure pulp, add one-half as much sugar as fruit pulp. Cook slowly with lemon rind, stirring frequently to prevent scorching, until thick and clear. Ladle into hot sterilized jars. Fill to within one-half inch of top. Seal immediately. Process in water bath canner (180° F.) 20 minutes.

JAMS

Jams contain more sugar than fruit butters, therefore are thicker mixtures. For each pound of concentrated fruit pulp add ¾ to 1¼ pound of sugar.

Strawberry, blackberry, and raspberry jams are the most popular. Cook jam in small quantities in order to secure a delicate product.

Jams are usually made from chopped or crushed fruits and cooked with sugar until they have a semi-jelly consistency. Pieces of fruit should be evenly distributed throughout the mixture. To accomplish this, stir the jam for 5 minutes after it is removed from the heat. Then pour it into hot sterilized jars and seal immediately. Process 20 minutes in a hot water bath at 180° F.

STRAWBERRY JAM

4 cups berries, mashed
or
2 10-ounce packages frozen strawberries
3 cups sugar
Pinch of salt
¼ cup lemon juice if berries are really ripe

Mix berries, sugar, salt, and lemon juice. Heat slowly, stirring until sugar dissolves and mixture boils. Boil rapidly for 5 minutes. Remove from heat. Cover and allow to stand overnight. Next morning, boil rapidly for about 7 minutes or until mixture reaches jelly stage. Pour into hot sterilized jars. Seal immediately. Process in hot water bath 20 minutes.

Jams with Added Pectin

Mix powdered pectin with the cold crushed fruit and heat before adding sugar.

Add liquid pectin to the thickened, cooked fruit and sugar mixture immediately after you remove it from the heat.

Cooking time is the same whether liquid or powdered pectin is used. Time is only 1 minute at a full rolling boil. A rolling boil is recognized when bubbles roll over the entire surface of the mixture.

Recipes for jams and other sweet spreads are included with the box or bottle of commercial pectin.

RHUBARB-STRAWBERRY JAM WITH LIQUID PECTIN

1 pound rhubarb
¼ cup water
1 quart strawberries
6½ cups sugar
½ bottle liquid pectin

Slice thinly or chop, without peeling, about 1 pound of rhubarb. Add ¼ cup water, cover, and simmer until rhubarb is soft, about 1 minute.

Crush thoroughly about 1 quart strawberries. Combine fruits and measure 3½ cups into a large saucepan.

Thoroughly mix sugar into fruit in saucepan. Place over high heat, bring to a full rolling boil, and boil hard for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and at once stir in fruit pectin.

Skim off foam with metal spoon. Then stir and skim for 5 minutes to cool slightly and prevent floating fruit.

Ladle into hot sterilized jars. Seal. Process in hot water bath (180° F.) 20 minutes. Five or 6 half pint jars.

PEACH OR APRICOT JAM WITH POWDERED PECTIN

4 cups crushed fruit
¼ cup lemon juice
¼ teaspoon salt
1 package powdered pectin
5 cups sugar

Crush fruit and measure into kettle. Add lemon juice, salt, and pectin. Mix thoroughly. Place on high heat, stirring constantly to prevent scorching. Bring to a full rolling boil. Boil hard for 1 minute, and continue stirring. Remove from heat. Stir mixture for 5 to 6 minutes. Remove scum. Ladle jam into hot sterilized jars. Seal. Process in hot water bath (180° F.) 20 minutes.

PEAR HONEY JAM

3 pounds pears (9 cups)
1 cup crushed pineapple
1 lime or lemon
5 cups sugar

Wash, peel, core, and quarter pears. Grind pears and lime through food chopper, using a fine blade. Measure fruits and add sugar. Cook slowly, stirring frequently until mixture thickens.

Ladle into sterilized jars. Seal. Process in hot water bath (180° F.) 20 minutes. Three pints.

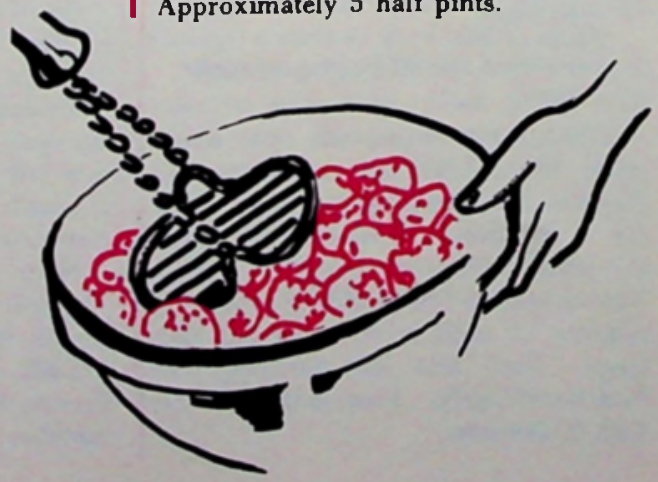
FREEZER STRAWBERRY JAM

2 cups prepared berries, about 1 quart
4 cups sugar
¾ cup water
1 box powdered pectin

Thoroughly crush berries, one layer at a time. Measure 2 cups into a large bowl or pan. Mix sugar thoroughly into fruit and set aside. Mix water and fruit pectin in small saucepan. Bring to a boil and boil 1 minute, stirring constantly. Stir into fruit. Continue stirring about 3 minutes. A few sugar crystals will remain.

Ladle quickly into jars. Cover at once with tight lids. Let stand at room temperature until set. (This may take up to 24 hours.) Store in freezer. Use in 6 to 8 weeks.

If jam will be used within 2 or 3 weeks, it may be stored in the refrigerator. This freezer-jam has a fresh fruit flavor because berries are not cooked. Approximately 5 half pints.



CONSERVES

Conserves usually contain from ½ to ¾ of a pound of sugar to each pound of prepared fruit.

Conserves are made from firm or hard fruits and vegetables and are cooked before sugar is added. Conserves should be cooked rapidly. The nuts should be dipped into boiling water a few seconds before they are added to cooked mixture.

Nuts should not be added to the conserve more than 5 minutes before cooking is completed because long cooking will destroy their flavor.

Process jars of conserves in hot water bath (180° F.) 15 minutes.

PLUM CONSERVE

3 pounds plums, Damson, sliced
1½ pounds sugar
1 lemon, sliced thin (slices cut into quarters)
1 pound raisins, seeded
1 orange, sliced thin (slices cut into quarters)
1 cup nuts, chopped

Cook plums, sugar, lemon, raisins, and orange with a little water until thick and clear. Add nuts. Ladle into hot sterilized jars. Seal. Process in hot water bath (180° F.) 15 minutes. Four pints.

DRIED APRICOT CONSERVE

1 pound apricots, dried
1 No. 2 can pineapple (2¼ cups) crushed
1 lemon, seeded, ground
1 orange, ground
¾ cup sugar for each cup of fruit mixture

Wash apricots. Soak overnight in water to cover. Cook, strain, and reserve juice. Rub apricots through coarse sieve. Add juice, pineapple, sugar, lemon, and orange. Simmer until thick, about 15 minutes. Ladle into hot sterilized jars. Seal. Process in hot water bath (180° F.) 15 minutes. Three pints.

CRANBERRY CONSERVE

4 cups cranberries
⅔ cup water, cold
⅔ cup water, boiling
1 cup raisins, chopped
1 cup nuts, chopped
1 orange, thinly sliced (slices cut into quarters)
3 cups sugar

Pick over cranberries. Wash. Add cold water. Cook until skins burst. Press through sieve. Add remaining ingredients except nuts. Simmer until thick, about 20 minutes. Add nuts. Ladle into hot sterilized jars. Seal. Process in hot water bath (180° F.) 15 minutes. Four pints.

RASPBERRY-CHERRY CONSERVE

3 cups raspberry pulp
3 cups pitted sweet cherries
4 cups sugar
½ cup nuts

To prepare raspberry pulp, press berries through a sieve or food mill to remove seeds. Simmer cherries until tender. Add berry pulp and sugar. Cook slowly until sugar dissolves, stirring occasionally. Cook rapidly until thick, about 30 minutes.

Place nuts in sieve, pour 1 quart boiling water over nuts. Drain. Add to fruit mixture in kettle. Continue boiling two minutes. As mixture thickens, stir frequently to prevent sticking. Ladle, boiling hot, into sterilized jars. Seal. Process in hot water bath (180° F.) 15 minutes. Four half pints.

MARMALADES

Marmalade consists of thin slices or small pieces of fruit suspended in a clear jelly or jelly-like sirup. Citrus fruits or other fruits with jelly making properties are usually used in marmalades.

A greater volume of marmalade is obtained when the pectin is soaked from the skin of the citrus fruits. This is accomplished by allowing the thinly sliced fruit to stand in water for a day, then heating it and repeating this process for another day.

ORANGE-CARROT MARMALADE

3 oranges
1 lemon
4½ cups water
3 cups grated carrot
4½ cups sugar
½ teaspoon ground ginger
or
¼ cup chopped crystallized ginger

Slice oranges and lemon as suggested in orange marmalade recipe. Add water and allow to stand overnight. Heat to boiling and add carrots and boil 10 minutes. Stir in sugar and ginger and continue boiling to jelly stage.

Seal in sterilized jars and process in hot water bath (180° F.) 10 minutes.

CITRUS MARMALADE

1 grapefruit
1 orange
1 lemon
Water
Sugar

Follow directions for orange marmalade. Approximately 4 pints.

KUMQUAT MARMALADE

3 quarts water
2 cups kumquats, thinly sliced circles
3 cups oranges, thinly sliced
1 lemon, thinly sliced
9 cups sugar
½ teaspoon salt

Follow directions for preparing orange marmalade. Eight half pints.

ORANGE MARMALADE

6 oranges
6 lemons
Salt
Water
Sugar

Wash fruit. Cut into quarters, remove seeds. Place sections on cutting board and cut with sharp knife into very thin slices or fruit can be put through food grinder if time is the object rather than appearance. Measure fruit and juice. Add three times its bulk in water. Let stand 24 hours. Boil 15 minutes. Let stand another 24 hours. Boil 30 minutes until pulp is tender. Measure. Add an equal volume or equal weight of sugar.

Cook until mixture jellies. Remove from heat and allow to stand 5 minutes. Stir constantly to prevent fruit from separating from jelly. Ladle into sterilized jars within ½ inch of top of container. Seal. Process in water bath at simmering temperature (180° F.) 10 minutes. This process will insure good keeping qualities for several months.

If marmalade is to be used within two weeks, it may be poured into jelly glasses and covered with a thin (⅛ inch) layer of hot melted paraffin. Approximately 12 pints.

GRAPE-CRANBERRY MARMALADE

2 cups grape juice
2 cups stemmed cranberries
½ teaspoon grated orange rind
3 cups sugar

Combine juice, cranberries and rind; bring to a boil. Add sugar. Bring slowly to boiling, stirring until sugar dissolves. Cook rapidly to jellying point, about 5 minutes. Stir occasionally to prevent sticking. Ladle, boiling hot, into sterilized jars. Seal. Process in water bath (180° F.) 10 minutes.

PRESERVES

When making preserves, the aim is to retain as much of the natural form of the fruit (berries or uniform pieces of larger fruits) as possible.

The fruits are cooked carefully in the sugar sirup so that the sirup will replace the juice in the soft fruits. This exchange requires several hours to take place. As the fruit absorbs the sirup, the fruit becomes plump. It is necessary to use a medium sirup at the beginning of the cooking process because if the sirup is too heavy, the juice is drawn out much more rapidly than the sirup enters, and the preserves will shrink greatly.

Recipes for different fruit preserves give the type of sirup to use in order that the exchange of water and sirup will take place in each fruit at the proper rate.

As the fruit becomes saturated, the preserves will be tender, clear, bright, and of good natural color. At this time, the preserves should be removed from the heat and allowed to stand overnight. During this period the fruit will become higher in sugar content, and the sirup will become thinner.

After standing overnight, the fruit may be removed from the sirup and packed in the canning jars. The sirup is boiled down to concentrate it to desired thickness, then poured over the fruit in the container.

This method of completing preserves will insure a rich, sweet product without scorching and overcooking which often results from a short continuous cooking period.

Preserves tend to mold easily when stored in warm places, and to prevent this change in quality and flavor, the preserves should be completed by processing the pint or half pint jars in a hot water bath (180° F.) 15 minutes.

Some recipes for preserves using soft fruits like cherries or strawberries suggest that the fruit need not be boiled. In this method, a single layer of fruit is placed in a shallow pan and the fruit covered with the hot sirup. This recipe often is called "Sun" or "Sunshine" preserves because the preserves are made by allowing the fruit to absorb the sirup by slow heat as from the sun, or the fruit may be placed in a slow oven (250° F.). This process requires several days to complete but makes a delicious preserve.

Spreads classified as preserves have a soft, spready consistency. Other foods, like candied fruits or fruit peel and crystallized ginger, absorb more of the heavy sirup and become dry enough to be handled easily.

GRANDMOTHER'S STRAWBERRY PRESERVES

2 quarts cleaned strawberries
6 cups sugar
Pinch of salt
2 tablespoons lemon juice

Pick large, firm strawberries right from the patch. Wash, cap, drain well. Measure fruit and sugar. Combine in alternate layers in large kettle and allow to stand 10 minutes or until sirup forms.

Heat mixture slowly to boiling, then boil rapidly about 10 minutes until berries are clear and sirup begins to gel. Remove from heat and allow berries to stand overnight to plump. Lift plumped berries and place in sterilized jars. Heat sirup to boiling and pour over fruit in jars. Seal.

Process in hot water bath (180° F.) 15 minutes. Six half pints.

SUN COOKED OR SUNSHINE BERRY PRESERVES

Make sirup, allowing 1 pound sugar and ½ cup water or fruit juice for each pound fruit. Cook sirup until sugar is thoroughly dissolved. Add berries. Let stand overnight. Skim out berries. Spread on shallow dishes. Boil sirup until it spins a thread. Pour over berries. Cover with glass and place in sun until fruit is plump and sirup is thick. Time required will vary from a few hours to a few days according to conditions. Turn berries in sirup once a day. If weather is cloudy, put in very slow oven (250° F.) until of desired consistency. Pack in sterilized jars and process in hot water bath (180° F.) 15 minutes.

QUINCE PRESERVES

Wash, peel, quarter, core, and cut into thin slices or small chunks as desired. Cook quince in boiling water until tender. Use ¾ pound of sugar for each pound of raw fruit. Add sugar to cooked fruit and continue cooking until sirup is consistency desired. Pour into sterilized jars. Seal immediately. Process in water bath (180° F.) 15 minutes.

YELLOW TOMATO PRESERVES

Select small, firm, pear-shaped tomatoes. Scald, dip in ice water, and peel. Allow ¾ pound of sugar for each pound of prepared tomatoes. Cover tomatoes with sugar. Let stand overnight. Drain. Boil juice until it spins a short thread. Add tomatoes and one thinly sliced lemon for each pound of tomatoes. Cook until sirup is thickened and tomatoes are clear.

Cool and allow to stand several hours or overnight to plump fruit. Lift fruit and place in sterilized jars.

Boil sirup; then pour over tomatoes in jars. Seal. Process in water bath (180° F.) 15 minutes.

GINGER PEAR PRESERVES

Select firm pears, such as Kieffer pears. Wash, peel, quarter, core, and weigh fruit. Cut into thick slices. Allow ¾ pound of sugar to each pound of prepared pears. Place fruit in saucepan in alternate layers with sugar. Let stand overnight.

Next morning add one large piece of ginger root and one-half lemon, thinly sliced, to each pound of pears before cooking. Heat slowly to boiling, then boil rapidly until fruit is tender, clear, and sirup is of desired thickness.

Allow mixture to stand overnight. Pears will absorb sirup and become plump. Lift pears from sirup and pack in sterilized jars. Heat sirup to boiling and pour over fruit in jar. Seal. Process in water bath at (180° F.) 15 minutes.

WATERMELON RIND PRESERVES

Select melons with thick rinds. Peel off all green portion using only the white part of the rind. Cut into small pieces. Soak in mild salt water overnight (½ cup salt to 1 gallon water). Drain and cook in clear water for about 30 minutes or until tender. Drain well.

For 4 pounds (11 cups) of the melon rind, make a sirup of 9 cups sugar, 8 cups water, 4 lemons sliced, and add 1 or more sticks of cinnamon. Boil the sirup, lemon, and spices 5 minutes before adding the rinds. Add rinds and cook until transparent and clear.

Remove cinnamon stick. Allow to stand overnight. Lift melon chunks from sirup and place in sterilized jars. Heat sirup to boiling and pour over fruit. Seal. Process in water bath (180° F.) 15 minutes.

OTHER PRESERVED FOODS

CANDIED FRUIT PEEL

Peel from 3 or 4 oranges
or
2 grapefruit
or
5 or 6 lemons
2 cups sugar
1 cup water
2 tablespoons light corn sirup
⅛ teaspoon salt

Use shells from breakfast fruits. Cover with cold water and bring slowly to the boiling point. Boil until tender. Drain. Cut into narrow strips with scissors.

Make sirup of sugar, water, corn sirup, and salt. Add strips of peel. Boil 10 minutes in open kettle. Cover and let stand 12 hours or overnight to allow the peel to absorb sirup. Next day, boil again for 10 minutes. Then let it stand for several hours or overnight and cook again until sirup is nearly absorbed. Lift peel out, drain, and toss each piece in granulated sugar. Makes 3½ cups peel.

CRYSTALLIZED GINGER ROOT

Select slender shoots of ginger root. Scrub thoroughly with stiff brush or nylon net ball. Cut into thin slices and boil until tender. Continue the preparation, following directions given for *Candied Fruit*.

CANDIED FRUITS

The principle of making candied fruit is the same as that of any other preserve. However, much more sugar is incorporated and process is thereby lengthened.

Wash, peel, or otherwise prepare fruit according to kind. Weigh. Allow 1 pound sugar and 2 cups water to 1 pound fruit. Boil sugar and water until sugar dissolves. Cook fruit in boiling water until just tender. Time will vary according to kind and maturity of fruit. Drain.

Add to cooled sirup. Let stand 1-2 days. Skim out fruit. Drain.

Increase density of sirup by adding ¼ cup sugar to each cup liquid. Boil until sugar dissolves. Cool. Add fruit. Let stand as before.

Repeat latter part of process each two days until sirup is very thick. Fruit should become clear, plump, and glistening after six or more such treatments. Then drain from sirup and dry in sun or very slow oven (250° F.).

Reasons for Substandard Sweet Spreads

When evaluating the quality of your sweet spreads, consider these reasons for the inferior qualities in the products.

Shriveled fruit

Sirup too heavy at start of cooking

Fruits broken

Sirup too thin
Overripe fruit
Stirring during cooking
Overcooking

Tough Fruit

Variety of fruit
Too heavy sirup at start of cooking

Dark Color

Too long cooking

Strong flavor

Too long cooking
Sugar added at beginning of cooking

Fermentation

Small proportion sugar
Improper or broken seal
Too short cooking period

Mold

Small proportion sugar
Delayed or broken seal
Air present in jar

Crystallization

Too much sugar
Product overcooked
Sugar added late in cooking process

Note: Jams, butters, marmalades, conserves, and preserves contain pulp or fiber. All jars should be processed in a hot water bath at simmering temperatures (180°-190° F.) for the recommended time. This heat process will remove air from the jar and insure a better flavored spread.

Score Card for Jams, Fruit Butters, and Marmalades

Use this score card in rating your product if you want a numerical score. Containers of jams, fruit butters, and marmalades should be opened by the judge to determine true quality. The smell, taste, and feel in the mouth are important factors in determining true quality of the sweet spreads.

	Perfect Score	Your Score
APPEARANCE	30	_____
Container (5 points) ... Should be of suitable size and shape, of clear glass, clean, and with neat uniform labels.		
Sweet Spread (25 points) Should be free from lumps, indigestible material, or coarse fiber. The color should be as pleasing as possible and not too dark or too light.		
PRESERVATION	20	_____
Sweet Spread (20 points) Contents should be properly protected from air. Should be free from bubbles or any sign of fermentation or molds.		
QUALITY	50	_____
Consistency (20 points) Should be thick and soft; not watery, candied or tough.		
Flavor (30 points) Should have a pronounced fruity flavor, be of proper sweetness and spiciness; not too strong, too sweet, flavorless, or overspiced.		
	100	_____

Score Card for Preserves and Conserves

Use this score card in rating your product if you want a numerical score. Containers of preserves and conserves should be opened by the judge to determine true quality. The smell, taste, and feel in the mouth are important factors in determining true quality of the sweet spreads.

	Perfect Score	Your Score
APPEARANCE	30	_____

Container (5 points) ...
Should be of suitable size and shape, of clear glass, clean, and with neat uniform labels.

Fruit (15 points)
The fruit should be cut in pieces of suitable size and shape. The natural color should be maintained as far as possible. There should be uniformity both in color and in size and shape of pieces. Arrangement should be such that there will be no loss of space, yet the fruit should not be crushed together and should present an attractive appearance. Fruit should be arranged uniformly throughout the jar and the arrangement should be as regular as possible.

Sirup (10 points)
Should be clear, of a pleasing color, without sediment or air bubbles. There should be a suitable proportion of sirup to fruit.

	Perfect Score	Your Score
PRESERVATION	20	_____

In canning jar, the food should be properly sealed so as to be airtight. The contents should be free from the action of all yeasts, molds, or bacteria.

QUALITY	50	_____

Fruit (35 points)
Pieces should be whole and firm; should be tender but not overcooked; should be of agreeable flavor, with the natural taste of the fruit altered as little as possible.

Sirup (15 points)
Should be of suitable thickness or density; should be of pleasing flavor and afford sufficient sweetening for fruit.

	100	_____

Questions and Answers

Q. Why should preserves, marmalades, conserves, jams, and butters be processed in a hot water bath?

A. *This procedure is to drive air from the jar and secure an air-tight seal. Air left in the jar may cause discoloration, loss of flavor, and may result in spoilage.*

Q. What is processing?

A. *Processing is subjecting the jar of food to a heat treatment. All products discussed in this publication should be processed at simmering temperature in a hot water bath.*

Q. What is simmering temperature?

A. *Processing at simmering temperature means placing the hot sealed jars on a rack in kettle of hot water and holding the temperature about 180° to 190° F. for recommended time.*

Q. Why are ring bands removed from the sealed and cooled jars of sweet spreads?

A. *Jars of sweet spreads are sealed when the flat metal lid is down and does not move. When tapped with a metal spoon a clear ringing sound means a good seal. The ring band is no longer needed to hold the flat lid on the jar. Ring bands will rust onto the jar and make it difficult to remove. When ring is removed, jars can be washed and dried thoroughly thus preventing mold or bacteria from growing under ring.*

Q. Why are clean, dry ring bands replaced loosely on jars to be carried any distance in a car or to be exhibited at fair?

A. *A ring band makes for better appearance as jar is displayed. It also secures the flat lid after jar has been opened and evaluated for quality by the judges. This closure will keep food sanitary and usable by the family even though it has been opened and displayed for several days.*

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